

A Newsletter Of




**DC Department of
Public Works
Office of Recycling
(202) 645-8245
www.recycle.dpw.dc.gov
Fall 2004**



Extending the classroom



Anacostia Senior High School students along with Yvette Judge, educator with the DC Office of Recycling, and the school principal, Dr. James Wilson, participate in the alternative fuel vehicle lesson.

General Motors Company brought a prototype fuel cell vehicle to Anacostia High School on Thursday, May 27, thanks to the DPW Office of Recycling. Yvette Judge, an educator in the recycling office, reached out to a contact at GM and facilitated the visit by the fuel cell powered vehicle. Fuel cells are recognized as an up-and-coming, clean technol-

ogy that may one day dramatically decrease gas usage with amazing environmental benefits. The GM vehicle display gave students an opportunity to see a concept they are learning about in class as it operates in the real world.

The DPW Office of Recycling has provided Project Learning Tree training to several Anacostia High School teachers, has helped establish the Planet Protectors after-school program, and has



Anacostia Senior High School students learned about alternative fuel vehicles in class and had the opportunity to ride in the GM HydroGen3 vehicle.

supplied resources for the Environmental Science Club.

Catch the spirit

Do you have the recycling spirit? Do you look for recyclable containers and packaging when you shop? Do you collect your recyclables at home? Do you seek recycled-content products? If so, keep up the good work. If not, maybe this America Recycles Day is the time for you to catch the recycling spirit.

For the eighth year in a row, communities across the country will celebrate America Recycles Day on or around November 15. Last year, more than 850 local and statewide events reminded Americans that recycling conserves resources, saves energy, reduces air and water pollution, and helps create jobs.

Each year in DC, the Office of Recycling celebrates America Recycles Day with a special event. Last year, the Office co-sponsored a two-day electronics recycling event, collecting 33 tons of electronics. For details on this year's events, please visit our website at www.recycle.dpw.dc.gov or call (202) 645-8245.



▲ Volunteers from the Boys and Girls Club of Greater Northeast and Southeast Washington get hands-on recycling experience.

◀ Volunteers unload electronics and place them on pallets.

Yes, I want to catch and spread the recycling spirit! Here's what I'll do beginning this America Recycles Day:

- ☐ Recycle something I don't currently recycle.
- ☐ Recycle more _____.
- ☐ Buy recycled-content products.
- ☐ Visit a solid waste facility, such as a recycling or composting center or a landfill.
- ☐ Ask my teacher or club leader to invite a speaker who will tell us more about recycling and buying recycled.

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ ZIP: _____

Phone: _____ School: _____

Grade: _____ Age: _____

Mail this entry form to: America Recycles Day Contest, c/o Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments, Department of Environmental Programs, 777 North Capitol Street N.E., Suite 300, Washington, D.C. 20002-4239.

We must receive your entry form by November 1, 2004. All entries will be forwarded for the national America Recycles Day prize drawing.



Psst! Recycling is easy! Pass it on...

Does your family know how easy it is to recycle? If not, maybe it's time that you tell them. Here's everything they'll need to know to get started.

At the curb, you can recycle metal food and beverage cans, newspaper, white and mixed paper, magazines and catalogs, #1 and #2 narrow-necked plastic containers, glass bottles and jars, and corrugated cardboard.

The District is piloting a new single-stream recycling program in Wards 7 and 8. As a part of this program, residents will receive a large, 32-gallon blue cart for all of their recyclables. You will still have to separate recyclables from trash. The only difference is that you'll be placing all of your recyclables mixed together into this larger bin. Recycling will still be collected on the same day as trash collec-

tion. In areas with twice-per-week trash collection, recyclables will be collected on the second day as they have been in the past. The blue cart, single-stream system will go citywide within the coming year.

Even though recyclables will be mixed together, it is still important to prepare them properly. All containers should be rinsed, and caps and lids should be removed and discarded. Flatten plastic containers and boxes to save space in your bin or cart. Make sure all of your paper products are clean and dry.

Only put recyclable products in the recycling bin. Please don't put trash into your recycling bin or cart!

For more information, call our office at (202) 645-8245 or visit www.recycle.dpw.dc.gov.

Grounds for gardeners

Could your morning cup of joe be good for your garden? The answer is YES!

Coffee grounds, which are high in nitrogen, are a good addition to your compost pile or vermicompost (worm composting) bin. You can also apply coffee grounds directly to your soil. However, coffee grounds are acidic so mix them with brown materials such as fall leaves to keep a healthy acid/alkaline balance in your soil.

If you want more coffee grounds for your garden than your own daily pot will provide, check with a local restaurant or coffee shop. Many are already providing coffee grounds to gardeners and others may be willing to do so. For instance, Starbucks stores nationwide provide grounds to residents who request them through the “Grounds for Your Garden” program.

Don’t forget—you can compost your paper coffee filters, too!



Go to the source

Whether you’re a researcher, an interested citizen, a teacher, or a student, there are many great books and other resources to help you learn more about reducing, reusing, recycling, and buying recycled. By reading more about these topics, you will see what a difference you can make with your choices and actions. Plus, you’ll be excited to share your newfound knowledge with your friends, family, neighbors, co-workers, classmates, and others.

Search for resources at the local library or try to find them at used bookstores. Here are some book lists that will get you started:

- America Recycles Day Suggested Readings on Recycling, Garbage, Composting, Vermiculture (worm composting), and the Environment: www.america-recyclesday.org (click on “Suggested Reading”)
- U.S. Environmental Protection Agency’s site for Teachers and Students: www.epa.gov/epahome/students.htm
- An Annotated Bibliography of Children’s Literature with Environmental Themes: www.teachers.net/archive/envirobkbs.html
- National Association for Humane and Environmental Education List of Best Books: www.nahee.org/awards/best_books.asp
- Outdoor Book Reviews, a Guide to Outdoor Literature: www.ronwatters.com/BkMain.htm

Here’s a great way to spread the word to others. Compile your own list of favorites about the environment. Visit the library and write down the call letters and numbers for each of these books or other resources. Back at your computer, create an easy-to-read bookmark with the titles and library information. These bookmarks would even make good holiday card inserts or gift tags.

Thinning down

In recent years, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency estimates that 15.5 million tons of container and packaging waste have been prevented by manufacturers’ redesign efforts. As a result, in the past decades, some of your favorite containers have lost weight:

- In 1972, there were 21.75 aluminum cans in a pound. Today, there are 32 cans per pound.
- Non-returnable glass containers are 44 percent lighter today than they were in the early 1970s.
- In 1977, a 2-liter bottle weighed about 2.4 ounces. Today, it weighs only 1.8 ounces.
- The average 1-gallon milk jug weighs 30 percent less than it did 20 years ago.

Give me the good news first

Today, Americans are recycling between one-quarter and one-third of the trash they generate. Some regions of the United States have much higher rates than others. And, of course, in states with disposal bans on specific materials or deposits on items such as beverage containers, rates for those materials are much higher than the national averages.

Enjoying the highest national recycling rates are lead-acid batteries at 94 percent, corrugated boxes at 70 percent, newspaper at 60 percent, steel cans and packaging at almost 59 percent, yard waste at about 57 percent, and both large appliances (often called “white goods”) and office papers at 55 percent. Other products continue to see growth in their recycling rates, including magazines and tires.

The news when it comes to beverage containers is less good. Soft drink and water bottles (made from #1 PETE plastic) are only being recycled at a rate of about 36 percent, down from a high of 46 percent a decade ago. Milk jugs and detergent bottles (made from #2 HDPE plastic) have also seen a drop in their recycling rate, to 28 percent from a high of just over 30 percent.

However, even as the proportion of recycled to discarded containers has dropped, the weight of the recycled plastic has continued to grow because more of these containers are being used.

Glass containers have also seen a drop in recycling—both in terms of percentage and total weight. The current rate is around 22 percent, down from a high of 27 percent.

The most distressing trend, however, concerns aluminum beverage containers. Nationwide, the recycling rate for aluminum cans peaked in 1992 at 65 percent. As of 2003, that rate had dropped to only 44 percent. The Container Recycling Institute estimates that Americans are now failing to recycle more than 50 billion recyclable



aluminum cans each year. If you stacked these cans end-to-end, they would circle the Earth 153 times!

Aluminum should be one of recycling’s greatest success stories. It does not degrade during the recycling process and can be endlessly recycled back into the same product. In fact, an aluminum can used and recycled today could be melted, remanufactured, refilled, and back on store shelves within six weeks! Aluminum recycling also requires as much as 95 percent less energy and creates 75 percent less pollution than making new aluminum from bauxite ore.

Meanwhile, Americans are under the impression that they are still recycling aluminum cans at the same rate they did in the early 1990s. A study by Alcan, an aluminum can recycler, found that 70 percent of Americans say they always or often recycle aluminum cans. One of the reasons many Americans may be overestimating their recycling is that they are still recycling all or most of their cans at home. However, more beverages than ever—including those in aluminum cans—are being consumed and trashed away from home while people are on the go.

Sources: “The State of Garbage in America” by *BioCycle* magazine and the Earth Engineering Center of Columbia University, “Municipal Solid Waste in the United States” by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and Franklin Associates, and the Container Recycling Institute.

Quick tips to eliminate waste

At work or school, creating less trash is easy. At least, it is if you take these simple steps:

- Use both sides of paper.
- Use scrap paper and envelopes for messages.
- Reuse rubber bands, paper clips, and other fasteners.
- Use e-mail whenever possible.
- Create electronic folders to save needed e-mails, rather than printing them out and filing them.
- Refill or buy remanufactured ink jet and laser toner cartridges.
- Keep everyone in-the-loop by posting information on a bulletin board.
- Share magazines with friends.
- Carry your own refillable mug or cup.
- Pack a waste-free lunch in a reusable bag or box with washable containers and a cloth napkin.



Photo: iStockphoto.com

Photo: iStockphoto.com

Help for the holidays



As the holiday season approaches, you are probably already planning trips and parties. Beginning in November and continuing through January, many people travel, visit relatives, eat big meals, prepare special foods, and give more than a few gifts.

Because of this, the holiday season is often also the waste season. It doesn’t have to be. Here are some tips to help you have a less wasteful—and more relaxing two months.

Party Planning — Know how many people are coming to each event you’re hosting and plan the food accordingly. If you have more leftovers than your family can finish, send food home with your guests. Avoid disposable decorations, dishes, cups, and napkins. Instead, reuse old family decorations, your own dishes, glasses, and cups, and reusable, cloth napkins. If you don’t have cloth napkins, maybe this would be a good time to invest in some. They are inexpensive and can be reused year after year.

Travel — Road trips often include disposable food packaging and recyclable drink containers that end up in roadside trash cans. If you’re traveling by car, pack snacks (and even lunch) in your own washable, reusable containers. You can put them into a cooler with drinks from home. When you get to your destination, wash your containers. They’ll be ready to repack for the trip home. Look for roadside recycling containers, which are available at some rest stops. If you don’t find them, put your recyclable aluminum, glass, and plastic beverage cans and bottles into a bag or box and recycle them when you get home or to your destination.

What (really) matters

This is a great time of year to discuss what really matters most to you. During this season of giving, learn what your family and friends really need. You might find that they could use more of your time and attention. Time and attention don’t cost money and almost always create significantly less waste than giving them a lot of stuff.

Here are some sample resolutions for your family or friends:

- We will schedule time for unscheduled fun each week. During our free time, we will find a fun activity that all can take part in, such as playing a game, taking a “moon hike” outdoors in the evening, working on a puzzle, creating a scav-

Gift Giving — Make a list of everyone to whom you’ll give a gift this holiday season. After making the list, decide the total amount you want to spend on gifts. Now, decide what you would like to give. One budget-conscious and waste-reducing way to give gifts is to shop for gently-used books and other items at secondhand and antique stores. Another way is to give of yourself, such as offering to babysit for young children or drive an elderly person to the store. You also might consider giving to a good cause in honor of someone on the list; you can make a card describing the group that has received money or goods in their name. Framed photos make a wonderful gift—you might even be able to make a frame or find a unique used frame. If you choose to buy new gifts, look for items such as jewelry or handmade stationery made from recyclables.

Gift Wrapping — Reuse wrapping paper, gift bags, ribbon, and tags from past years. If you don’t have any on hand, make your own wrapping paper by decorating the blank side of brown paper grocery bags, reusing colored sections of newspaper, old maps, or children’s artwork, or using fabric, shelf paper, or wallpaper scraps. In other words, begin with items that you already have on hand! Or, “wrap” the gift in a basket or canvas bag that will be reusable later. If you buy wrapping paper, look for paper with recycled-content.

Holiday Greetings — Think about the holiday greetings that your family most enjoys—they are probably the cards or letters that include newsy notes and fun photos. Consider making your own holiday greeting postcard or letter this year. Of course, print it on recycled-content paper and mail it in recycled-content envelopes. Or, e-mail paperless greetings instead.

enger hunt, making a craft project, or cooking.

- We will devote more of our time to helping each other. For instance, kids can help parents wash the car, do the dishes, or fold the laundry. The whole family can help elderly relatives, neighbors, or friends with a big project around the house or yard. Parents can commit to spending an hour doing an activity of the children’s choice.
- We will volunteer our time to make our community a better place. There are many opportunities for whole families to volunteer. On a regular basis (monthly, quarterly, etc.), we will do something to improve our local environment or help someone in need.

School Recycling Challenge

We are challenging schools to Rethink, Reduce, Reuse, and then Recycle:

- **Rethink** behaviors that negatively affect the environment and change these into positive, environmentally conscious actions,
- **Reduce** the amount of waste produced,
- **Reuse** what is still useful in other creative ways, and then...
- **Recycle** as much as possible.



Students at Janney Elementary School get awards from the DC Office of Recycling for setting up a consistent and efficient recycling program at their school. Other schools doing a great job recycling and caring for the environment are John Burroughs Elementary School, Anacostia Senior High School, and HD Woodson Senior High School.

In order to help schools do this, we offer teacher training in the environmental education curriculum Project Learning Tree (PLT) after which teachers can qualify for \$50 to \$1,000 in greening grants. Schools will be challenged to conduct schoolyard habitat projects, perform energy and trash audits, and establish and maintain successful recycling programs. Schools are encouraged to recycle as many items as possible. At the end of the year, one school from each level will be recognized for its efforts.

Our goal at the Office of Recycling is to empower students with knowledge so that they make a meaningful difference in their surroundings. Our Environmental Education Program covers several issues, including implementing a recycling program or increasing the amount of solid waste recycled, minimizing the amount of solid waste produced, increasing energy conservation at school, home, and in the community, and changing everyday behaviors that negatively affect the environ-

ment.

Some highlights and benefits of our Environmental Education Program to teachers are:

- Use of the DC Office of Recycling education staff as an environmental resource
- Aid in setting up a school recycling program
- Support with service-learning activities
- Access to the award-winning, multidisciplinary environmental education curriculum, Project Learning Tree (PLT)
- Opportunity to take part in training for PLT environmental education curriculum
- Eligibility to apply for GreenWorks! \$50 to \$1,000 Grants for school greening projects (PLT-certified teachers only)
- Field trips to Recycling Centers and other venues related to environmental

Students are taken on a tour of a recycling facility. Here, a student learns how various recyclables are baled to be sold to manufacturers. ▼



education

Please call the DC Office of Recycling at (202) 645-8245 and ask to speak to an educator. School requests are taken on a first-come, first-served basis, so it is best to request assistance early and plan ahead.

We have various educational brochures, fact sheets, and curriculum training information, and we provide recycling bins to schools.

Helping Hands

SWEEP, the Solid Waste Education and Enforcement Program that is part of the D.C. Department of Public Works, sponsors the Helping Hands Neighborhood Clean-up Program. SWEEP provides tools, including rakes, brooms, shovels, and bags, and residents (like you!) provide the helping hands.

Talk to your friends, relatives, and neighbors and get involved in this great program. For more information or to schedule a clean-up in your neighborhood, please call (202) 645-7190.

We want your suggestions, questions, and comments!

**DC Department of Public Works
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www.recycle.dpw.dc.gov

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after you have read it!*

E-Cycling Collection Event April 24th

To celebrate Earth Day, the DC Office of Recycling in collaboration with several government and private partners sponsored an electronics recycling collection event. There were over 75 volunteers from various agencies and organizations, including the Office of the Federal Environmental Executive (OFEE), General Services Administration, National Park Service, UNICOR, DC Divas Women's Tackle Football Team, HD Woodson Senior High School, Eastern Branch Boys and Girls Club of Greater Washington, and a number of District citizens.

During the six-hour event, 33.5 tons of electronics, more than 200 pounds of recyclable batteries, 375 pounds of cell phones and accessories, and 3,000 pounds of tennis shoes were collected.

Electronics were stacked on pallets and shrink-wrapped before being loaded on tractor-trailers and taken to an electronics recycler. This is just a small portion of the 33.5 tons of electronics collected. ▼



▲ Volunteers from partnering organizations directed the 600+ area citizens who dropped off electronics, dry-cell batteries, tennis shoes, and cell phones at the Earth Day E-cycling Event on April 24th.



▲ Students from HD Woodson Senior High School did a great job helping out at the Earth Day Electronics Recycling Event held at the Carter Barron Amphitheatre in Northwest Washington, D.C.